ISSN 0317-2473

Research Discussion Paper No. 66

A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR THE STUDY OF MIGRATION AND URBANISATION

by

David Achanfuo-Yeboah

Department of Sociology
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

MAY 1990

90-06454/

A Theoretical Model for the Study of Migration and Urbanisation

Introduction

The great diversity of processes in migration and urbanisation makes it necessary to have a framework which would allow migration and urbanisation to be studied with all their attributes. Several factors work individually and jointly to influence migration and urbanisation. These may be classified as demographic, social, cultural, economic, and political. The proposed model is based on the principle that sociocultural, economic and political developments work through a number of variables, to increase the propensity to migrate and, hence, influence internal migration and urbanisation (Table 1). The utility of this model is that it will make it easier to carry out empirical studies of the determinants of migration and urbanisation.

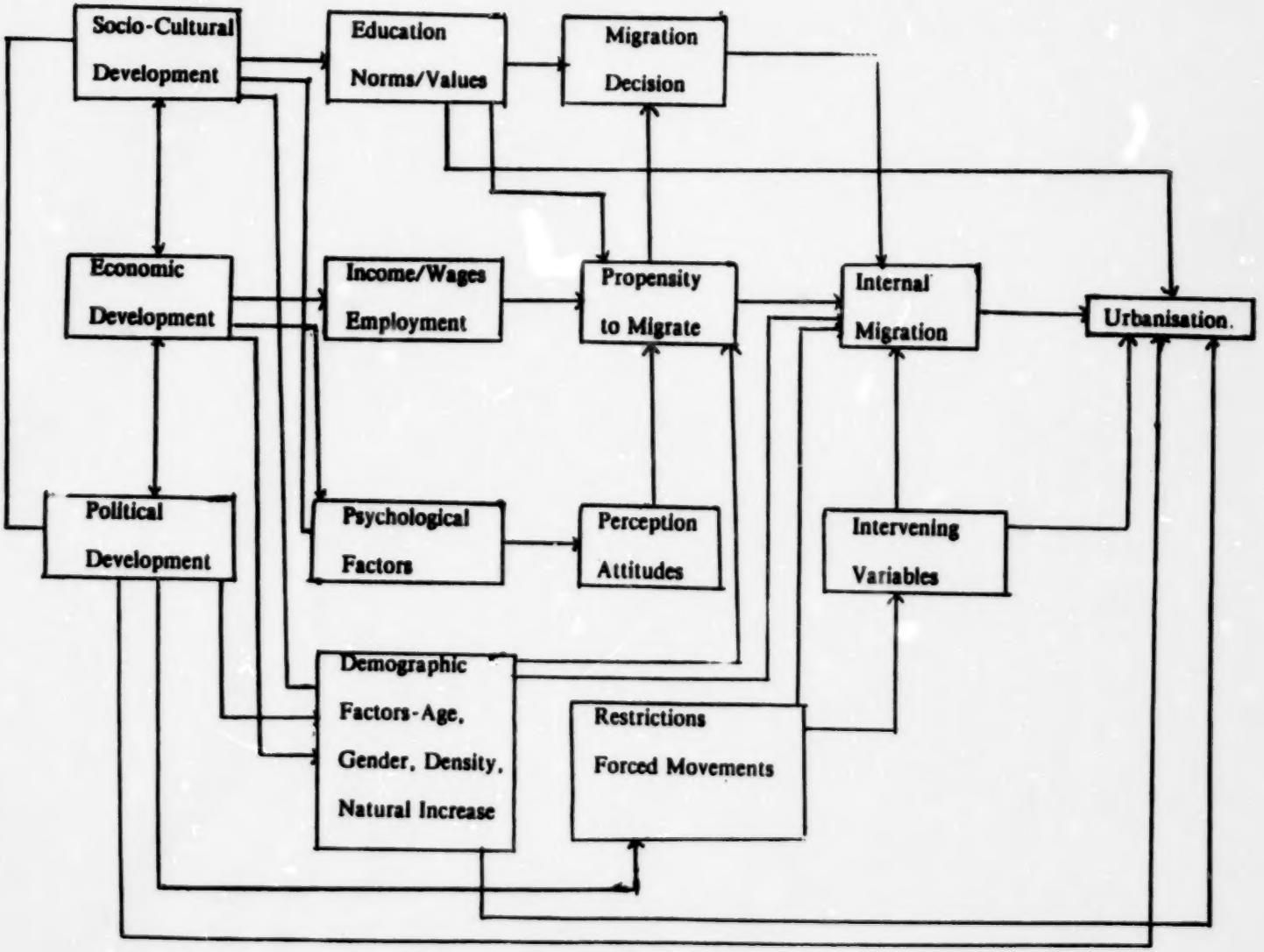
Socio-Cultural Developments

According to the model, as socio-cultural development occurs in any developing society, more people become educated, norms and values become modified and lots of changes occur.

More educated people means an increase in the number of people with skills (no matter how limited) which will allow them to work in urban and non-agricultural occupations. Since most non-agricultural industries are located in the more developed regions and urban areas, the model presupposes that socio-cultural development will lead to an increase in movements from less developed regions and rural areas of countries to more developed regions and urban areas.

Another way in which education affects the propensity to migrate lies in the tendency to locate a disproportionate number of educational institutions in urban areas and specific regions. This results in the situation where a certain category of migrants moves to particular regions or settlements to further their education or acquire more skills. This is especially true with the distribution of second cycle and third cycle institutions within many developing countries. Most secondary and tertiary institutions are located in urban areas and more

Table 1. A Framework For the Study of Internal Migration and Urbanisation



developed regions; the residents of less developed regions and rural communities can get these types of education when they move out of their area of usual residence, at least for the duration of their study. In this way also, education affects the propensity to migrate. A person who wants to further his/her education may have a high propensity to migrate. A person who has completed a certain level of education and, thus, acquired some skills may also have a high propensity to migrate.

Once a certain level of education has been completed, school graduates acquire some skills which encourage them to move to urban areas and more developed regions with a view to obtaining white collar or non-agricultural jobs. As a result internal migration occurs, and since most of them move to urban areas, urbanisation also occurs from this pattern of internal migration. School graduates move to urban areas because the training they receive discourages them from working on the land and this increases their propensity to migrate.

Social and cultural development may also influence the existing norms and values. This may take different forms. For example, the general belief that conditions are better in the area of destination may be affected and may change. Also, once people become educated as a result of socio-cultural developments, their cherished norms and values may become adulterated. This means that they may consider certain aspects of the existing norms and values obsolete, and may abolish them or improve upon them. Thus it is possible for socio-cultural developments to result in the situation where the norms and values which favour migration may be abolished.

Economic Development

The effect of economic development on internal migration and urbanisation is similar to the effect of socio-cultural development. As economic development occurs in a developing country, more economic infrastructures, industrialization and employment opportunities become available. The availability of these factors constitutes a pull factor which draws or attracts many migrants. Another concomitant of economic development is increase in wages and salaries. Again, most people, especially potential migrants, are attracted to areas where they are more likely to get higher income resulting in iternal migration.

Since increasing employment opportunities, improved socioeconomic infrastructures and higher wages and salaries occur mostly in urban areas, there is a tendency for migrants to move to towns and cities, which, in turn, results in increasing urbanisation. Indeed the results of a regression analysis (Achanfuo-Yeboah, 1989) corroborate this view, and show that net migration explains a substantial proportion of the variance in urbanisation among the various regions in Ghana. This, the proposed model concludes, may be true for other developing countries. The point is that empirical evidence from most developing countries suggests that most migrants move to towns and more developed regions on the basis of expected, rather than actual, income (Segal, 1972). It is a general belief among rural residents in most developing countries that urban wages are higher and they expect to get more income when they move to the towns and cities. If, as a result of economic development, which occurs largely in urban areas and more developed regions, high wages and salaries become prevalent in specific regions or settlements, migrants will be attracted to move to those regions or settlements. It must also be noted that improved economic conditions may further affect the provision of education, health care and other social programs and thus enhance the effects of socio-cultural development on internal migration and urbanisation. It must be noted that economic development has more effects on net migration and urbanisation. To the individual migrant, the decision to move is determined by a simple calculation of the economic gains and losses as determined by what he expects to earn when he goes to work in the urban areas (Todaro, 1969).

Sight should not be lost of the fact that the socio-cultural and economic variables also work through a number of intervening obstacles to affect internal migration and urbanisation. Among these are distance, topography, transportation, disease, hostile population, harsh climate and so on. Some of these intervening obstacles have been identified by Lee (1966).

Political Development

Political developments in a country may influence the nature and direction of internal migration and urbanisation. The role of political factors may be direct or indirect. The pattern of internal migration may be influenced when politicians enact laws restricting movement to

or from specific regions or settlements, make laws which compel people to move to or out of specific settlements. A case in point is when the Government of Ghana enacted an Act of Parliament which forced hundreds of thousands of people to move from the banks of the Volta River, following the construction of the Akosombo Hydro Electric Project in the early 1960s. Similar examples may be cited for Nigeria and many other countries.

Political factors also influence socio-cultural and economic development. Politicians may initiate programs which will result in socio-cultural and/or economic development which in turn influences the propensity to migrate, and the migration decision-making. In addition, in most developing countries, the decision as to where educational institutions, health facilities and government institutions should be located is made by politicians so that the political factor is directly and indirectly a very powerful force in determining the pattern of internal migration and urbanisation. The model also accepts that since laws may be promulgated to designate some settlements as towns, the political factor has a direct effect on urbanisation.

It should further be pointed out that the exogenous variables in the model do not in reality work in isolation. Socio-cultural developments may result from, and even influence, economic and political development. On the same note, economic development may influence, and be influenced by, socio-cultural and political developments and so on. In addition the effects of socio-cultural, economic and political development on internal migration and urbanisation may be direct as well as indirect through their effects on education, norms and values, health care, incomes and so on.

Psychological and Demographic Factors

Furthermore, socio-cultural, economic and political developments work individually and jointly to influence various psychological and demographic factors which affect internal migration and urbanisation. The psychological factors which have an influence on internal migration and urbanisation include the perception and attitudes of potential migrants as regards to internal migration. Specifically, there is a serious, but often neglected, psychological factor among rural school graduates that, once the city is reached, a good job will be obtained, more income earned and all problems overcome. This factor, which is

difficult to explain, partly explains the rush of most young school graduates to urban settlements in many developing countries. Segal (1972) and Caldwell (1969) have also documented that even though many migrants do not obtain what they had hoped for and become disillusioned in the city, only very few return. Very few actually return because there is a psychological factor of self-defeat among migrants when they return to the area of origin, usually the village. The point is that socio-cultural, economic and political developments may influence people's perception and attitude, as well as other psychological factors.

Also, there are many demographic factors which also affect internal migration and urbanisation. These include age, sex, total size of the population, population density, and natural increase. The effects of some of these demographic indicators on internal migration and urbanisation have been noted in the regression analysis (Achanfuo-Yeboah, 1989). Empirical studies in several developing countries reveal that most migrants are young adults, usually males. Ravenstein has asserted that females predominate short distance movements, even though this may not be completely true in Asia and Africa. The role of natural increase also affects internal migration and urbanisation. Since in most countries, a settlement is designated urban on the basis of the size of community, a higher rate of natural increase may result in increased urbanisation. In addition, higher rates of natural increase and high total population have resulted in higher population density in many agrarian societies, exerting excessive pressure on the land, and leading to fragmentation of land holdings. This fragmentation of land holdings, it has been noted, has tended to discourage school graduates from going into agriculture, leading to an influx of young school graduates into urban areas.

Again, it goes without saying that social, cultural, economic, political and related developments will individually and severally affect the demographic variables and through them internal migration and urbanisation. Improvements in social, cultural and economic conditions may influence societal norms and values related to fertility and thus rate of natural increase and total population which, in turn, may influence migration and urbanisation. In a similar way, social and economic change may result in more females in educational

institutions and employment. More females in education and employment means a possible reduction in fertility, rate of natural increase and total population. Thus social and economic changes are likely to influence demographic variables which may then influence the patterns of internal migration and urbanisation.

References

Achanfuo-Yeboah, J. 1989. Internal Migration, Population Redistribution, and Urbanisation in Ghana, Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

Caldwell J.C. 1969. African Rural-Urban Migration: The Movements to Ghana's Towns. New York,Columbia University Press.

Lee E. 1966. A theory of migration. Demography 3:45-59

Segal B. 1972. Urbanisation in Tropical Africa. In S.Ominde and C.E. Ejiogu (eds), Population Growth and Economic Development in Africa. London: Heineman.

Todaro M.P. 1969. A Model of Labour Migration and Urban Unemployment. American Economic Review 69:183-193